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Sixty-third year

Provisional

6042nd meeting

Friday, 12 December 2008, 3.40 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Jurica	(Croatia)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Panama	Ms. Jácome
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo
	Viet Nam	Mr. Hoang Chi Trung

Agenda

The situation in Chad, the Central African Republic and the subregion

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (S/2008/760)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Chad, the Central African Republic and the subregion

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (S/2008/760)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of the Central African Republic and Chad, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provision of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Poukré-Kono (Central African Republic) and Mr. Allam-mi (Chad) took seats at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Victor Da Silva Angelo, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Angelo to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/760, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad.

At this meeting the Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Victor Da Silva Angelo, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad. I now give the floor to Mr. Angelo.

Mr. Angelo: Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Council on the Secretary-General's report of 4 December 2008 on Chad and the Central African Republic, contained in document S/2008/760. I regret the late submission of this report, which was a result of the need to ensure that the Governments of both Chad and the Central African Republic were fully consulted on the proposed United Nations force. The report contains a refined plan and concept of operations for the proposed force and reflects an extensive process of consultation with the relevant parties.

Following my last briefing on 19 September, the Council, in resolution 1834 (2008), stated its intention to authorize the deployment of a United Nations military force to succeed the European Union-led military force (EUFOR) in Chad and the Central African Republic and requested an update on the planning and preparations for such a transfer of authority. For this purpose, a Technical Assessment Mission visited Chad and the Central African Republic in October and, subsequently, the United Nations held extensive discussions with both Governments, troop-contributing countries and EUFOR.

The Chadian government initially expressed reluctance to accept a United Nations force of 6,000 troops, stating that the security situation had improved in recent months and that such a force would place an excessive burden on the environment. High-level consultations were held in New York and in the field. On 29 November, during a meeting with the Secretary-General in Doha, President Déby gave his consent to the deployment of a force of 4,900 troops in eastern Chad. To provide for a force of 4,900, feasible reductions were identified, including helicopter support troops, signal units, special forces, reconnaissance units and logistical elements. This will reduce the logistical support and enablers to a minimum. Any further adjustments in the force would seriously impact its ability to implement the mandate.

In relation to the specific request by the Council that the United Nations establish a military presence in the northeastern region of the Central African Republic, the report presents three options. Should the

Security Council desire to establish a permanent military presence in northeastern Central African Republic, the force would need to have a more visible and wider ranging presence than that of EUFOR and it would also have to possess the capability to undertake regular patrols to Sam Oundja, 200 km south of Birao, where an important refugee camp is located.

In the meantime, the Secretariat has been actively engaged in the force generation process to ensure that there is no security vacuum at the end of EUFOR's mandate. So far, 16 nations have indicated their willingness to positively consider contributing to a force under the auspices of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), but their firm commitment is contingent on assurances that other troop-contributing countries would provide enablers, such as the medical level II hospital. In order to ensure the smoothest possible transition, commitments from EUFOR contributors to re-hat, even for a transitional period, need to be confirmed in the coming days.

Beyond the re-hatting of troops already on the ground, MINURCAT will require strong support from Member States with regard to force generation, including equipment and enablers. Given the fluid security situation, challenging geography and climate, the United Nations force must be highly mobile. I encourage all Member States to provide the necessary troops and support elements as soon as possible.

To succeed in the implementation of its mandate, the United Nations force must also have full freedom of movement. Prior to its deployment, the status-of-forces agreement between the United Nations and the Governments of Chad and the Central African Republic should be concluded, in addition to a memorandum of understanding in relation to infrastructure and the transfer and use of EUFOR sites.

Following the meeting between the Secretary-General and President Deby in Doha, a team of senior technical experts will travel to the region next week to further the consultations with national authorities on legal and administrative arrangements. In the meantime, MINURCAT has already engaged the appropriate authorities on the substance of those arrangements.

The situation in Chad remains fragile. The domestic political process, within the agreement of 13 August, has known some progress with the submission to the National Assembly of the draft bills

on electoral reform. Progress in the implementation of the Sirte Agreement of 25 October 2007 between the Government of Chad and the main rebel groups has been limited. Both Chadian armed forces and rebel groups have reportedly strengthened their positions on either side of the border in recent months.

The regular meetings of the Contact Group established under the Dakar Agreement of March 2008 and the recent resumption of diplomatic relations between Chad and the Sudan are encouraging. MINURCAT will continue to support the Contact Group, as the normalization of relations between the two countries is critical for improved security in that situation.

I wish to add that today my colleagues in the Sudan — the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Mission in the Sudan — have been contacted by senior Government officials, and they were told that the Government of the Sudan has identified a column of members of the Justice and Equality Movement with a large number of vehicles. We do not have confirmation of that information from the Sudanese Government, but we will certainly be very worried if that information is confirmed, because we really believe that the relations between Chad and the Sudan should normalize as part of the security and stabilization in the region.

On the humanitarian front, Chad continues to face a serious humanitarian crisis. Furthermore, reports of militant activity in the camps, including the recruitment of child soldiers, are very disturbing. So too is the ongoing prevalence of attacks and security incidents against humanitarian workers and the civilian populations.

The Mission has continued to work with Chadian authorities to facilitate the training and deployment of the *Détachement Intégré de Sécurité* (DIS), following its official establishment in late September. The target of training 850 DIS officers should be achieved in January 2009. The deployment of the DIS is ongoing despite significant logistical constraints.

As of today, the MINURCAT managed trust fund has received a little bit more than \$19 million in donor contributions, of the estimated \$23 million required to support the DIS in its first year of operations. The trust

fund is being depleted faster than expected and we are working very closely with the Government and with Headquarters to make sure that the trust fund can be replenished as soon as possible. We may have some time at the beginning of next year to call an international donors conference. In the meantime, it is important that donors continue to provide support to the trust fund.

I am also pleased to report the excellent cooperation with the Governments of Chad and the Central African Republic, with EUFOR, the United Nations country team and also the humanitarian community. MINURCAT will continue to collaborate and consult extensively with all relevant partners in the implementation of its mandate.

Let me conclude by saying that MINURCAT is committed to help create the security conditions conducive to a voluntary, secure and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons. It is nevertheless important to stress that stability in Chad is also dependent on the serious engagement of everyone in Chad — the Government and opposition leaders — in a democratic dialogue towards political inclusiveness and good governance. Working in collaboration with the international community, the United Nations stands ready to assist the parties in the peaceful settlement of their differences.

The President: I thank Mr. Angelo for his briefing.

I now give floor to the representative of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Poukré-Kono (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to take the floor and explain the position of the Government of the Central African Republic on the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/760), which we believe is of major and decisive importance to the future of our country. But first of all, I wish to congratulate the Republic of Croatia and you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of December 2008.

We welcome the report before us, which deals with the extension of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), its military component and the transfer of authority from the European Union-led military force (EUFOR),

whose mandate will end soon, to a United Nations military component.

We wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINURCAT, Mr. Victor Angelo, for his useful and helpful presentation of the report. However, the report has prompted my delegation to ask a few questions, which, if permitted, we would like to voice now.

Are the defense and security forces of the Central African Republic sufficiently battle-tested to be able to ensure safety and security in the north-eastern part of the country? The situation in that region is unclear, so should the civilians and refugees from other countries who are there just be abandoned? The recent withdrawal of humanitarian workers because of a lack of security was heartbreaking. However, can bad weather conditions prevent troops from continuing to move around in a time of war? Are those signs that people are tired of the Central African problem?

The security issue in the Central African Republic is relevant and topical today. There is a very complex crisis in the subregion, in particular in Darfur. There are people who are forced to flee because of violence; there is poverty and trafficking of illicit weapons. The armed forces are unable to control bandits or to impose order. Those are all issues that must be addressed over time.

As Council members are aware, the Central African Republic is trying to emerge from two decades of political and military upheaval that thwarted any attempts at development. The inclusive political dialogue began on 8 December and demonstrates that the people and Government want to turn the page of history. That is a significant step forward and cannot be ignored. But the Central African Republic is still too fragile for it to attempt to resolve all of its sovereign responsibilities. It needs the support of the international community, and we appreciate the efforts that have been made.

The United Nations technical assessment mission completed its report and has offered its assessment. We welcome the excellent report. But we are left wondering, because there is no reference to the exchanges with the authorities of the Central African Republic except for a reference to the confirmed desire to have a United Nations presence in the north-eastern part of the country. Council members should read

between the lines with regard to discussions with the country.

My delegation has another question about the numbers in the three options proposed for military presence in the north-eastern region of the Central African Republic. We have the impression that those conclusions are not the strongest.

The region being discussed today is it must be noted, a sensitive area, which is part of a triangle that includes borders of Chad, the Sudan and the Central African Republic. It is the trade route, via Port Sudan, to reach the Red Sea. It is also a zone rich in mineral resources with abundant fauna, but this animal life has been decimated by poachers over the past two decades of crisis because there has not been a powerfully equipped army in place.

With the Darfur crisis, refugees are pouring in because of rebellions and the reception of internally displaced persons. What used to be a haven of peace is in total upheaval today. Consequently, human rights have been affected and the environment has been devastated.

Humanitarian workers — whom we praise for their bravery and willingness to work in difficult and dangerous conditions — are always welcome. At this point, we believe that stabilization in that part of the Central African Republic has not yet really begun. The State is still trying to begin reforming the security sector. That very long and complex process requires the political will of the Government, which is now evidence, and adequate resources, in addition to the \$4 million received from the Peacebuilding Fund. This apparent stability is the result of the presence of EUFOR, since the Central African State has not really re-established its authority in the area.

The persistent instability that we would like to eradicate for good in the subregion also hampers good-neighbourly relations. It is time for concerted action with support from the United Nations to lead to the re-establishment of law and order. We welcome the MINURCAT exit strategy proposed in the report, which is perfectly in keeping with the reform process for the security sector. As has been said by an eminent diplomat, a close link should be created between security sector reform and MINURCAT.

We want to continue cooperating closely with the United Nations system, its humanitarian personnel and

associated humanitarian personnel. Out of a desire for continuity and because we do not want to leave any legal vacuum, and, given the fragility of the institutions in the country, the Government of the Central African Republic is therefore requesting that an operational military unit of about 500 troops be kept in the consolidated Birao area for humanitarian, political and economic reasons.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chad.

Mr. Allam-mi (Chad) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, thank you for this opportunity to contribute my Government's observations on the contents of the report under consideration (S/2008/760).

First of all, I would like to welcome the briefing on the report of the Secretary-General given to us by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Angelo, and also for this opportunity to make my observations on the report.

Our experience with the European Union-led military force (EUFOR) offers us many valuable lessons that can inspire us in the design of the new force to ensure an effective implementation of the original mandate, which strikes us as being both good and clear, given that the international presence in eastern Chad is not a classic peacekeeping operation, as we have often been reiterated.

In this regard, in the context of the fruitful ongoing consultations that will continue to take place in the future between the competent Chadian authorities and the team of the Secretary-General, we believe that we are not far from arriving at definitive shared conclusions that will enable the immediate planning of that force with a view to an effective transfer of authority on 15 March 2009 between EUFOR and the new force. At the same time, of course, we underscore our support for the request made by our Central African brothers and neighbours, as stated by their representative, for the renewal and strengthening of the presence of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) in the North-East of their country.

Furthermore, allow me to reiterate my Government's position whereby, in order to guarantee the lasting effects of a United Nations presence in eastern Chad, there are no grounds for giving it a political mandate, given that the political questions

related to the situation in eastern Chad are being addressed in frameworks with which we are well acquainted. Here, too, our position aims simply to ensure heightened efficiency so that the ongoing mediations are not uselessly complicated or duplicative. However, we welcome the fact that the United Nations is supporting this process and will be involved in it.

With regard to the deployment of the *Détachement Intégré de Sécurité* (DIS), the 850 planned personnel are late in being deployed, given the slowness and limited capacity of the United Nations centre responsible for their early training. We do have a sufficient unit of police officers and gendarmes to offer to MINURCAT. At the same time, we have recommended the increase of the level of the DIS to 1,700 troops. We reiterate our desire that the financing of the DIS should come from the United Nations budget. In its absence, however, we appeal to the international community for its contributions to the Trust Fund.

We agree with those who are of the view that no military force can sustainably guarantee security if the political context underlying the original insecurity does not change. Let us not forget, however, that this force must serve the law, that is, the democratic rule of law that is being established within Chad, and that it must be stronger than the illegal groups that are being maintained from abroad. That means that the establishment of the rule of law and democracy that we hope to consolidate within Chad will necessarily require stability and peace in the country to thwart the obscure strategies of armed groups.

For us, the source of our insecurity comes from the East of our country, which is destabilized by the effects of the crisis in Darfur: Sudanese refugees, displaced Chadians who are victims of Janjaweed attacks, repercussions in eastern Chad of the intercommunity conflicts in Darfur, the exploitation of these conflicts by politicians to establish and use armies to overthrow democratic national institutions, widespread cross-border banditry, and so on.

Without wishing to poison the relationships with our Sudanese neighbours and brothers, we must state nevertheless that we do not understand the observations that certain parties have made in seeking to equate the aggressor and the victim, and to engage in a bizarre dialectic that seeks to justify the causes by the

consequences. Refugee camps, displaced persons camps, forced recruitment, including of child soldiers, trafficking in weaponry, violations of human rights in the area and impunity are all clearly the consequences of the Darfur crisis. We would have favoured moving the camps or a true neutralization of the area, while assuming the responsibility of securing our own border. That is the truth of the matter. In Chad, there is no political resolve to favour insecurity or impunity. We do not have sufficient capacity to address the magnitude of the challenges we face in the field. The international community is called on to help us to strengthen our capacity, although clearly not at any price.

Without a doubt, settling the crisis in Darfur will be the fundamental political solution the situation in eastern Chad. We shall spare no effort, if so required, to enable a successful outcome to the negotiations to achieve peace in Darfur. No Sudanese rebel movement in Darfur has received or will receive Chad's support unless it is in the service of peace. The rebels may enjoy of local support owing to the intra-communitarian border war, but that is not the responsibility of the Chadian Government.

To strengthen national cohesion, the Chadian armed groups must renounce the use of force and must return to the country, in full respect of Syrté Agreement of 25 October 2007, rather than refuting the Agreement on the pretext that it has expired or by inventing an alibi in order to continue their subversive operations against the interests of their country.

Additionally and above all, establishing a lasting peace in Chad will require the strengthening of the democratic rule of law in the country through a genuine implementation of the provisions of the political agreement of 13 August 2007. In spite of the inevitable criticism on the part of the opposition, the Chadian Government believes that the process is still headed in the right direction and is committed to seeing the process through to its conclusion in the form of free, transparent elections.

While we are discussing replacing EUFOR with a MINURCAT military component, I would like to convey my country's the gratitude and acknowledgement to the European Union, which has answered our expectations, as well as those of humanitarian workers, seeking to protect people exposed to the prevailing insecurity in eastern Chad.

In particular, we would like to thank France, who initiated this rescue operation and serves as its principle component. We would like to underscore that, in contrast to allegations launched by some against France, which is a long-standing friend of my country, this operation is not seeking to support a regime, but rather to help a country and its people remain standing and survive in view of a security and humanitarian catastrophe that threatens peace and security in the subregion.

We also wish to commend humanitarian workers who, through their activities, risk their lives on a daily basis for the sake of vulnerable people.

Finally, it would be remiss to conclude without repeating the ongoing readiness of the Chadian Government to cooperate with the United Nations with a view to the preparation for the replacement of EUFOR by a military component of MINURCAT.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Representative, Mr. Angelo, for his presentation of the Secretary-General's report (S/2008/760).

I would also like to express particular gratitude to the representatives of the Central African Republic and of Chad for their statements. Statements from countries from the concerned regions add useful elements that members of the Council should take into account, as is the case here.

My country supports the concept of the operations outlined by the Secretary-General in his last two reports. That is, for a military operation of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) to replace the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) at the expiry of its mandate.

We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment that this force should include a highly mobile and responsive capacity, including a strong air component. Along with other members of this Council, my country has supported the establishment of a United Nations military component and we would like to thank the Secretary-General for the submission of three options in his report.

Taking into account the repeated requests of the Government of the Central African Republic to this Council, and the broad recognition that EUFOR's presence has contributed to improving the security

situation in its zones of operation, my country has listened very closely to what was said by the representative of the Central African Republic. In going through the Secretary-General's report we tended to favour the second option, and without a doubt his words have confirmed our beliefs. We hope that the Council and the Special Representative will have a fruitful discussion on the viability and effectiveness of these options.

In regard to the first of these options, we should consider whether this might lead to a most unwelcome security vacuum at this point in time. On other occasions, my country has also underscored the importance for this Council to address the root causes of conflicts and not only the consequences or symptoms of these armed conflicts.

As a result, we wish to agree with the Secretary-General's report on MINURCAT of 12 September (S/2008/601), in which it was stated, in paragraph 83, that

"the expansion of MINURCAT to include a military component would only be effective if, in addition to its present police, rule of law, human rights and civil affairs mandate, the Mission were mandated to support Chadian stakeholders in addressing underlying causes of insecurity relevant to the safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons."

In this regard, we welcome the information contained in this latest report of the Secretary-General considering the activities undertaken by MINURCAT in order to support the Chadian authorities in regard to the judiciary and prisons in terms of the training and deployment of the *Détachement Intégré de Sécurité*, as well as their joint work with the Government of Chad and with civil society in preventing sexual violence.

In particular, we are greatly interested in MINURCAT's work in promoting reconciliation and dialogue on a local level, as was the case in Kerfi. We would like to seek additional information from the Special Representative concerning these efforts and the lessons learned from that process.

We believe that this form of support activities could be further strengthened and for this reason, we support the recommendations for additional tasks for the Mission outlined in paragraph 83 of the report dated 12 September which recommends, first of all,

“(a) support to national and local authorities in resolving local tensions to enhance the environment for internally displaced persons;

“(b) support the Government’s efforts to end impunity for crimes against civilians and humanitarian workers;

“(c) at the regional level, continue to play a role as a observer along with the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur in the contact group that was established in the 13 March Dakar Accord to monitor its implementation and assist, as necessary, the Governments of Chad and the Sudan in building good, neighbourly relations.” (S/2008/601, para. 83)

We believe that through these undertakings and efforts, it would be possible to meet the benchmarks set for MINURCAT’s withdrawal as listed by the Secretary-General in section IX of this latest report.

On the regional situation, once again, my country would like to emphasize the importance of this context and would like to congratulate the Government of Libya and the Contact Group for their important efforts in seeking to improve relations between Chad and the Sudan.

We welcome the news of the exchange of Ambassadors between these two countries and hope to see a successful implementation of the deployment of a peace and security force along the border between these two countries as agreed.

Finally, once again, we must condemn the attacks and the harassment of humanitarian workers in eastern Chad, behaviour which is wholly unacceptable, particularly in view of the lives of the men, women and children whose lives depend on this assistance. We hope that the deployment of the second MINURCAT force will provide hope and relief to these persons.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank Special Representative Angelo for his briefing. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representatives of Chad and the Central African Republic. I believe their statements offered important positive information about the activities and the results of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCAT) and the European Union-led military force (EUFOR).

My comments will focus on four points. First, the civilians in North-East Central African Republic and eastern Chad are still in a very vulnerable situation. Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, who recently visited the region, spoke to us about this last week. The Darfur crisis continues to have humanitarian and security consequences in the region, many civilians still need international assistance in order to survive.

Like the representative of Chad, we welcome the work of humanitarian workers on the ground and urge all parties to scrupulously respect their security and their freedom of movement. Naturally, we condemn the banditry to which they continue to be subject. We are also very disturbed by information that cites armed groups recruiting in refugee and internally displaced persons camps, and we once again call for the respect for the civilian and humanitarian nature of the camps.

Secondly, we agree with the Secretary-General’s assessment of the positive results of EUFOR in Chad and the Central African Republic. That operation, in keeping with its mandate, has helped to improve the security conditions in which humanitarian assistance is provided. Mr. Holmes also stressed to the Council that the international presence had helped to stabilize the security situation, to reassure vulnerable civilian groups and to improve security for humanitarian workers. Of course, not all of problems are resolved — far from it — and this is certainly no time for the international community to relax its efforts. Nevertheless, we would stress in particular the initially encouraging return of some internally displaced persons in Chad, which was precisely one goal of the European Union and United Nations missions. EUFOR, the European Chad-Central African Republic mission, the largest military operation of the European Union to date, is thus another important example of how the European Union can support United Nations action.

Thirdly, we stress the importance of the role of MINURCAT and the D  tachement Int  gr   de S  curit   (DIS) reiterate our full support for the work of the Special Representative, and welcome cooperation between the Chad authorities, the United Nations and the European Union on the ground, as did the Special Representative himself. We welcome the initial deployment of the DIS, which was somewhat delayed at first. We hope that it will be fully deployed very soon and command Mr. Angelo’s personal commitment in this context. The multidimensional presence created

by resolution 1778 (2007) offers a novel structure in which one part cannot succeed without the other.

Fourthly, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report to the Council on follow-up to EUFOR once its mandate expires.

In September, the Council expressed its intention to deploy a military component to take over from EUFOR in Chad and the Central African Republic. We welcome the agreement arrived at between the Secretary-General and President Idriss Déby on the number of troops to be deployed in eastern Chad to provide an efficient and effective replacement for EUFOR and to ensure improved geographic coverage so as to better protect refugees and displaced and vulnerable persons. John Holmes himself stressed the importance of this aspect of the situation last week.

As for the Central African Republic dimension of the operation, it is also essential to have a credible military presence in the north-eastern part of the country so that, at the end of EUFOR's mandate, there is no recurrence of the security vacuum of two years ago, which contributed to the destabilization of the region. It is because the European Union is present in Birao that the humanitarian and security situation stabilized somewhat, despite recent evidence of the precariousness of the situation.

In this context, we believe that the first option on the Central African Republic offered in the report might be insufficient. We therefore support a broader option allowing the deployment of a deterrent force in Birao that could also cover the surrounding areas. We stand ready to discuss the modalities of such a deployment.

I reiterate the importance of United Nations readiness to take over at the end of the European Union mission on 15 March 2009. From the very beginning of EUFOR, the European Union has said that this would be a transitional operation ending on 15 March 2009. That date approaches; we must prepare for it carefully. The European Union and the European contributors to EUFOR in particular are committed to ensuring a smooth transition. We urge the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to that end and invite potential troop contributors to join in discussions on this topic.

On the basis of these observations, the French delegation will, over the next few days, circulate a draft resolution to members of the Council. It is our hope that the Council will be able to adopt it swiftly to

ensure a smooth transition from EUFOR to MINURCAT on 15 March 2009, as scheduled.

Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata (Italy): I, too, would like to thank Special Representative Angelo for presenting the Secretary-General's report on the transition from the European Union-led military force (EUFOR) to the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT). At the same time, I would like to express my appreciation for the statements made by the Permanent Representatives of the Central African Republic and Chad.

The picture emerging from the Secretary-General's report is indeed a mixed one. Instability continues to prevail in the eastern provinces of Chad, although it is mainly due to banditry rather than to the activity of the armed opposition movements. On the other hand, progress in Sudan-Chad relations, as evidenced by the exchange of ambassadors as well as by further steps towards the establishment of a joint monitoring force along the border in the framework of the African Contact Group, are encouraging signs of possible further improvement in the security situation.

From what the Permanent Representatives of the Central African Republic and Chad have said today, as well as from what the non-governmental organizations reminded us last week, it would seem important to continue to provide a security framework in the eastern part of Chad to ensure protection of the displaced and refugee population and to allow for the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance. The transition from EUFOR to a United Nations operation will serve this objective, and we are ready to start negotiations on a draft resolution to this end.

At the same time, it has also been underlined that it is essential that the root causes of instability in Chad be addressed. My country supports the political process based on the 13 August agreement between the Government and the opposition, as well as the Sirte agreement between the Government and the armed opposition movement. As for the number of troops, we appreciate the update in planning made by the Secretariat in the substantial reduction of the mission's size. We wonder whether additional cuts can be envisaged in consultation with the Government, taking into account the effectiveness of the mission, of course, as well as the overall sustainability of peacekeeping in Africa and the amounts of troops from other crisis situations.

The Security Council, we believe, should apply fair criteria in managing the limited resources at our disposal. In this context, I would also like to draw the attention of the Council once again to the situation in Somalia and the need to urgently find a way to support the African Union Mission to Somalia in the future.

For the same reason, we do not see a substantial difference between the overall situation in eastern Chad and the one in the Central African Republic. It would therefore seem logical that, if we are going to replace the European Union-led military force (EUFOR) in Chad, we would do the same in the Central African Republic. Besides, we need to take into account the request of President Bozizé to maintain international troops in the north-eastern part of the country. His efforts to pursue national reconciliation and the political dialogue — which is proceeding well in Bangui, as we know — should also be rewarded, as should his cooperation with the United Nations.

I take this opportunity to confirm Italy's readiness to keep the hospital in Abéché for the time necessary to ensure a smooth transition.

Finally, I would like to commend the exemplary collaboration that the United Nations and the European Union have once again established in the maintenance of peace and security. Chad and the Central African Republic are important examples of our ability to maximize our impact and ensure coherence between different actors and different instruments.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations on the subject.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.